

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-05  
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R 101459Z MAR 78  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7164  
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USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMCONSUL JERUSLAEM  
USIA

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 1384

E.O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PINT, SY  
SUBJ: ASSAD'S DOMESTIC LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM

1. SYRIAN MEDIA HAS DUTIFULLY BEGUN FOCUSING ON ASSAD'S MARCH 8 INAUGURAL SPEECH AND COMMENTING ON ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNTRY. 179 INDIVIDUALS DETAINED UNDER MARTIAL LAW ARE REPORTED RELEASED AND PRESS CLAIMS THAT A NATIONAL DEBATE WILL NOW COMMENCE OF FINDING A NEW FORMULA FOR EXPANDING THE PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL FRONT, NOMINALLY THE NATION'S HIGHEST POLITICAL AUTHORITY, AND ENHANCING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN "LEADING THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL AND POPULAR ACTION." A FRONTPAGE AL-BAATH EDITORIAL PREDICTS THAT SYRIAN POLITICAL LIFE COULD BE REVITALIZED.

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2. THE LEAD TISHRIIN STORY SAYS THAT THE NEW PHASE WILL LESSEN THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE COUNTRY'S PLITICAL LIFE. EMPHASIS IS ON FINDING METHODS TO TRANSLATING INTO PRACTICE PRESIDENT'S GUIDELINES EXPANDINGTHE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE. LEAST ANYONOE GET THE

IDEA THAT THE BAATH PARTY WILL GO INTO ECLIPSE, TISHRIIN ARTICLE REPORTS THAT THE PARTY "WILL DEVOTE PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THIS QUESTION," BUT LEAVENS THIS BY NOTING THAT FRONT PARTIES AND A BROAD CROSS SECTION OF THE PEOPLE WILL ALSO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS. POLITICAL CIRCLES ARE SAID TO VIEW THIS DEVELOPMENT AS "AN EXPRESSION OF THE LEADERSHIP'S CONFIDENCE IN THE PEOPLE."

3. IN EXPANDING ON THE NEW FORM PNF COULD TAKE, ARTICLE REMINDS READERS THAT THE CONSTITUTION STIPULATES THAT THE BAATH PARTY IS THE SENIOR PARTY IN THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY AND HEADS THE PNF. ARTICLE IMPLIES THAT BATHHI-DOMINATED POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS (E.G. LABOR CONFEDERATION, PEASANT'S UNION, ETC) MAY BE ADDED TO THE PNF, ALONG WITH INDEPENDENT GROUPS AND PERSONALITIES "BELIEVING IN THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF THE COUNTRY'S POLICIES." BAATH PARTY UNITS, ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, WILL BE CONDUCTING DIALOGUES WITH THE CITIZENS TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO MAKE THE PNF CAPABLE OF LEADING POLITICAL ACTION.

4. AL-BAATH EDITORIAL FOR ITS PART CALLS UPON POLITICAL, POPULAR, AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO TRANSLATE ASSAD'S ANNOUNCED GOALS INTO CONCRETE PLANS AND SAYS THIS WILL "ENRICH THE COUNTRY'S DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE."

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5. WHY LIBERALIZATION? TISHRIIN EDITOR AMID KHULI RELATES THIS POLICY TO THE NEED TO MOBLIZE THE COUNTRY TO ACHIEVE "A STRATEGIC BALANCE" (WITH ISRAEL). HE SAYS SUCH A TASK "REQUIRES A NEW FORMULATION OF NATIONAL ACTION AND FORMULATING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MASSES AND THE AUTHORITIES".

MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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